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Marketing Data Lake: Turn Raw Data to Actionable Insights

Data Lakes are Changing the Game for Omni-Channel B2B and B2C Marketing

Marketers have more data and tools at their disposal than ever before. Information is generated nonstop from web analytics, marketing automation, CRM, social media and other systems used by both B2B and B2C marketers.

Conspicuously absent in this array of technologies is a single platform that can tie everything together. As data and technologies accumulate, marketers are confronted by stovepipes of complex information that can undermine results.

That's changing with the emergence of the marketing data lake. Compared to conventional data management and analytics, a marketing data lake is distinguished by two key characteristics:

- It supplies a unified repository for the complete range of information generated by various customer touchpoints, activities on website, mobile apps and campaigns across every channel.
- It enables self-service analytics for marketers to generate actionable insights not possible with conventional approaches.

In effect, a marketing data lake provides the missing link for true data-driven marketing that meets customer demand for a consistent, personalized experience regardless of channel. It equips marketers to utilize big data to more precisely understand customers and deliver the right message at the right time by the best channel.

Big Data and The Superior Customer Experience

Despite the growth of marketing tools and data, teams lack clear cross-channel metrics and a 360-degree customer view. The inability to connect information across standalone applications leads to misleading results and inefficient manual work. Even as they recognize the ideal of personalized data-driven marketing, teams face such issues as:

- No consolidated view of customers or accounts
- Limited insights into product or service interest
- Limited ability to personalize interactions
- Inability to respond in real time to activity
- Difficulty changing or updating reports
- Challenges in measuring campaign effectiveness
- Inability to perform cause-and-effect analysis

Some organizations attempt to mitigate these issues with a data warehouse that consolidates disparate information for reporting. But data warehouses are limited to structured, preprocessed data from conventional business applications like CRM. Data warehouses contain only limited sets of data, and have certain limitations in flexibility and speed of reporting. They also can be very expensive to implement and operate.

In contrast, a data lake can store all data, in raw form from any source. That includes unstructured data from social media, web server logs, mobile devices or even the textual note fields in a Salesforce CRM application — along with structured data from conventional tools. Marketers gain new scope and flexibility to generate vital insights from data that previously overwhelmed them.

Typically based on an open source Hadoop framework and commodity servers, a data lake is also differentiated by cost-effectiveness and scalability to terabytes or petabytes of data. With marketing data lakes, sales and marketing teams are leveraging big data to deliver superior customer experiences.

For instance, a marketing data lake enables B2B marketers to track prospects across multiple touchpoints, channels and campaigns. As a result, they can personalize marketing efforts and increase the quality of leads for sales to work on.

Consider an example: A prospect opens your marketing email and clicks a link to register for and download content, such as a white paper, created by the marketing team and delivered via a marketing automation tool. After registration and download, you offer additional resources either through a “thank you” page or a follow up email.

When the prospect explores those additional resources, marketers can tell that the prospect is interested in other subject areas and move the individual to a new, more relevant campaign based on activity. If the prospect forwards your email to colleagues or friends, you can detect that activity with the right marketing automation tool.

Next, the prospect uses Twitter and LinkedIn to share the content and tags co-workers and friends. With a data lake, marketers can combine data from the marketing automation tool and social media to better score the lead, and understand the lead’s circle of influence to open opportunities to engage with additional prospects.

That equips your marketers to deliver more personalized campaigns and prepares your sales team with actionable insights to drive sales success. Other marketing data lake use cases include:

B2B targeting

A marketing data lake is especially valuable to generate an end-to-end view across the lead-to-cash cycle. And by consolidating data from common B2B applications such as Market, Adobe Analytics and Salesforce, sales and marketing teams get a single view of multiple influencers and decision-makers at the account level.

Deep segmentation

Data lakes enable marketers to micro-segment prospects and customers by multiple dimensions such as channel preference, peak interaction times, profitability, location and more. The result is more personalized engagement by consolidating and analyzing data from all sources and channels.

Marketing attribution

Customers typically interact with a brand a half-dozen times by various channels before a purchase. A data lake consolidates that multichannel activity for attribution analysis to understand campaign and channel effectiveness, and budget accordingly – a huge improvement over crude last-touch attribution models.

Social sentiment analysis

Marketers gain a deeper perspective when data from prospect and customer social media activity is integrated into profiles. This information can reveal product interest, purchase consideration and more, and opens opportunities for targeted outreach, especially valuable in B2B.

As a unified platform, a data lake promotes orchestration across marketing and sales that is otherwise difficult to achieve. Disparate stakeholders can “connect the dots” by collecting, organizing, exploring and understanding business events such as customer and prospect sentiments, campaign effectiveness and content attractiveness. A marketing data lake equips teams to:

- Correlate data for breakthrough insights
- Fine-tune messaging and targeting
- Accelerate campaign development, deployment and retargeting
- Speed response to customer interactions
- Increase prospect capture and lead conversion
- Increase lead quality
- Shorten lead-to-cash cycles



For context, data lakes are used for more than marketing. Organizations also deploy data lakes in such areas as supply chain optimization, fraud detection, manufacturing, defect tracking and healthcare delivery. In the majority of cases, data lakes complement conventional analytic systems in offering possibilities for new insights by blending information from traditional and non-traditional sources.

3 Best Practices for a Marketing Data Lake

For all its advantages, a marketing data lake could turn into a “data swamp” unless it’s based on industry best practices and a data lake management platform. Organizations need to ensure that data is properly captured, prepared and made accessible to non-technical users in marketing and sales.

Independent strategic and technology advisors can play a key role in helping organizations develop a marketing data lake blueprint and implement the optimal technologies and methodologies to maximize value. With the right approach, marketers can capitalize on best practices of self-service, collaboration and a data-driven approach to marketing.

Equip Marketers with Flexible Self-Service

Marketers can take full advantage of a data lake when they are equipped with self-service tools

for data access, preparation and analytics. Ideally based on best practices and leading technologies, self-service minimizes time-consuming IT involvement and gives marketers speed and flexibility in discovering data and deriving insights.

For instance, an information catalog provides powerful semantic search for users to quickly find relevant data, while faceted search can filter results. Data preparation tools let marketers identify data attributes, resolve duplicates, and validate names and addresses. Analytic tools such as Qlik and Tableau help marketers generate insights, while statistical and data mining tools may be used for more advanced analytics.

Collaborate Across Marketing, Sales and Support

Marketing, sales and support teams have traditionally functioned independently, without comprehensive access to the same customer data. That can result in an erratic experience for both B2B and B2C customers. A marketing data lake lets organizations bring disparate teams together on a collaborative platform based on the same data.

For instance, a consolidated view of marketing and sales data enables teams to determine whether marketing campaigns are actually converting into sales. In addition, multiple prospects and contacts in a single B2B account

can be linked and consolidated, regardless of how data was aligned in source systems. That equips B2B marketers to expand beyond single lead-based marketing to target all leads in an account.

Overall, a data lake promotes collaboration with common project workspaces to view and share analytic results, profile statistics, data lineage and more, while users can annotate records to supply important context.

Cultivate a Big Data-Driven Approach to Marketing

Data-driven marketing is replacing the generic brand advertising of yesteryear. A data-driven approach that leverages all manner of big data, from unstructured data in social media to structured contacts data in CRM, is fast-becoming a marketing imperative. A marketing data lake offers a unique opportunity to meet these challenges and better understand customer activity and intent across channels. But insights can't exist in a vacuum. It's critical to have mechanisms for analytic results to fuel marketing engagement through customer-facing systems, be they email, digital advertising, mobile SMS messaging or social media campaigns. Marketers need to be able to trigger real-time interactions based on customer activity at key points in the purchase consideration cycle.

Take the Marketing Data Lake Plunge with Trusted Guidance and Technology

Trusted strategy advisors and implementation partners help organizations develop and optimize a marketing data lake that drives revenue by delivering better omni-channel customer experiences. With more than 2,000 client engagements over 15 years, Trianz partners with Informatica to provide proven best practices and market-leading technology that gives marketing and sales teams an end-to-end data lake platform to turn raw big data into actionable insights.

Trianz helps organizations develop marketing data lake strategy (capability assessment, roadmap planning, big data and cloud readiness, operating model design) and implement data management, integration and analytic capabilities that are foundational for success. The joint Trianz-Informatica solution combines Trianz's expertise in marketing and enterprise information management with Informatica Marketing Data Lake and Customer 360 solutions, which supply industry-leading capabilities for marketers to capture, consolidate, analyze and use cross-channel big data from a growing array of sources.

With Trianz and Informatica, your organization can solve the problems of siloed applications with a marketing data lake engineered for analytics on all your data, from any source.

ABOUT TRIANZ

Trianz simplifies digital evolutions through effective strategies and excellence in execution. Collaborating with business and technology leaders, we help formulate and execute operational strategies to achieve intended outcomes by bringing the best of consulting, technology experiences, and execution models. Powered by knowledge, research and perspectives, we serve Fortune 1000 and emerging organizations across industries and geographies to transform their business ecosystems and achieve superior performance by leveraging Cloud, Analytics, Digital, Infrastructure and Security paradigms.